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WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, D. C., JUNE 10, 1898.

ALASKA SURVEYS.—The Geological Survey party, under Mr. George H. Eldridge, reached the head of Cook Inlet on April 27. They found at that time the ice in Sushitna River about to break, so that they hoped to be able to ascend the river by the middle of May. It was planned to detach a party under the direction of Mr. Spurr when they should reach a tributary reported as coming in from the west about 30 miles from the mouth. This small party is to cross the divide to the Kuskokwim, descending this river and possibly making the lower portage to Yukon River and rejoining the main camp at St. Michaels in September, or, possibly, should circumstances permit, turn toward the south to Bristol Bay, and from there reach St. Paul on Kadiak Island.

The principal party under Mr. Eldridge was, at the time he wrote, to go up the river to the main forks. He learned that the fork on the right had been ascended by a party of prospectors. Ascertaining from these men something of the country, he intended to take the more northerly or left-hand fork leading to a less known region and one concerning which information might be of greater value. Indians were found who had traversed these rivers in the winter, but who could give little information concerning the difficulties of summer travel.

One of the latest additions to the literature of Alaskan geography is contained in the bulletin of the Department of Labor for May, 1898. This has been prepared for the purposes of giving information relating to the opportunities for employment in the gold region. It consists largely of a narrative by Mr. Sam. C. Dunham of a trip undertaken by himself, under instructions from the Commissioner of Labor, beginning at Dyea on August 23, 1897. Besides the personal narrative, given in an interesting manner, are many general statements of the geography and condition of development of the country. With these are abstracts of statements from various individuals or officials met on the way, and sketch maps and views of important points.

The expedition of the Coast and Geodetic Survey to explore the mouths of the Yukon River has been delayed by difficulties of transportation and by not having at hand the light-draught boats,

which were built for the purpose of penetrating the waterways of the Yukon delta. These boats have been constructed in sections, and are being shipped to San Francisco, from which point they will be transported to the Yukon by the first available means. It had been planned to utilize the gunboat *Wheeling*, but on account of the war some other vessel must be taken.

No official chart has been made of the waterways leading from the ocean up to the main stream of the Yukon, and it is believed that a better channel than the one now used may be found. It is proposed to first go up this known channel and then attempt to work out in various directions to the outer bar, taking many soundings and carefully mapping the entire area.

FORESTRY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.—On July 1 a change is to be made in the personnel of the Forestry Division of the Department of Agriculture, and probably also in the character of the work performed. Mr. Gifford Pinchot, who has been selected as chief of this important branch of investigation, possesses unusual qualifications for successfully conducting this work, combining the energy and adaptability of a native-born American with a thorough training and practical experience in forestry work. He was born in Connecticut in 1865. His ancestors on one side came over with the Plymouth Colony, and on both sides were engaged in the Colonial and Revolutionary wars. He prepared for college at Exeter and in New York, and graduated at Yale with the class of 1889, taking the DeForest medal, and later going abroad, where he took a course in the French forest school; later he travelled extensively in the German forests with Sir Dietrich Brandis, First Inspector-General of Forests to the Government of India. Mr. Pinchot's forest studies were directed by the latter. After seeing much of the methods of forest management in France and Switzerland and something of the same in Austria, he returned to America and began to visit and report upon various properties, giving especial attention to forest conditions in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington, and later in Pennsylvania and New York. In 1892 Mr. Pinchot took up what is considered to be the first instance of forest management in the United States; this was at Biltmore, North Carolina. He prepared the exhibits for the World's Fair at Chicago to represent the work in the Biltmore forest and the forest condition of the State of North Carolina. Later he became a member of the National Forest Commission, visiting the forests in Montana, Idaho, Oregon, California, Arizona and Colorado, making long trips with

pack trains or on foot. Upon the completion of this reconnaissance he was designated as the representative of the Secretary of the Interior, and in this capacity visited many of the national forest reserves, particularly the Flathead, Lewis and Clarke, Priest River, Washington, Olympic, and Black Hills. He thus enters upon his new duties with an understanding not only of methods abroad, but also of the conditions at home. With this wide view, it is to be assumed that he will be able to devise and suggest methods of forest management suited to present conditions of development rather than attempt merely to imitate what has been done in Europe.

It is anticipated that the results of the work of this division will be of wide geographic interest, as Mr. Pinchot's ambitions are to carry on the investigations in the forests rather than in the office, to know and make known the exact conditions of our woodlands, rather than to speculate about them; and finally he hopes to place before the people of the United States and the farmers practical suggestions which will lead to a larger and better utilization of the forest resources.

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